

The Hidden Hero

Esther 5-6

I am pretty sure that there is not one person in this room who would deny that God is Sovereign.

We praise God for his sovereignty in our prayers and in our songs.

But when we try to comprehend that sovereignty we often become baffled.

And when we try to apply the truth of that sovereignty to our daily lives we fall short.

We usually fall on one of two sides of the ridgeline of truth:

1. We turn God's sovereignty into something resembling impersonal fate.
2. We limit God's sovereignty in one way or another.

It is only as we look at the details of God's Word can we avoid falling off one side of the ridge or the other.

Esther has made her decision to stand with God's people.

She has resigned herself: If I perish, I perish.

She has spent three days in fasting.

She has called her fellow Jews all over the city to fast on her behalf.

Now the time has come.

The day has arrived.

She will enter the king's inner court uninvited.

It is a bit anti-climactic since we know the rest of the story.

It is important to focus upon what Esther would have felt as she came to this day.

Yes, she was resolved and resigned.

But I would be surprised if her heart was not beating faster as she dressed to take this bold step of faith.

Read Esther 5:1.

1 On the third day

Esther put on her royal robes

and stood in the inner court of the king's palace,

in front of the king's quarters,

while the king was sitting on his royal throne

inside the throne room
opposite the entrance to the palace.

Notice the repetition of regality in this verse:

- royal robes
- royal throne
- throne room
- king's palace
- king's quarters
- entrance to the palace

We are to feel the weightiness of this encounter. Royalty is everywhere. It is palpable as Howard might say.

2 And when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court,
 she won favor in his sight,
 and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand.
 Then Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

There is the queen, standing in all of her beauty. But would she win the favor of the king? Would the king hold out his golden scepter to her?

Her heart must have been racing...

The king holds out his golden scepter. She wins favor in his sight. Esther approaches, step by step, until she is able to reach out her hand and touch the tip of the scepter. She has been formally received. She will not die.

But just because she has not been immediately sentenced to death, does not mean she is out of the woods.

Remember, she has a lot to ask of the king. She must explain that she has hidden her faith entirely from him. She must plead with him to go against the man he has just appointed to be second to himself in all the land. And this man also has added nicely to the king's coffers.

Esther has faith in her God, but it does not keep her from being crafty as well. She was not only fasting for three days, she was also devising a plan.

3 And the king said to her,
 "What is it, Queen Esther?"

What is your request?
It shall be given you,
even to the half of my kingdom."

The king knows that Esther must want something or she would not have taken such a risk to enter his throne room uninvited.

What is it, Queen Esther?
You almost get the feeling that he is not just tolerant of Esther interrupting him, but that he is truly pleased with her approaching him.

Tell me Esther what you want. It shall be given to you -
"even to the half of my kingdom."

Wow, that is saying something. The idea is that the king will maintain his position as king, but whatever else you may ask is fair game. Even though his statement should probably be taken as a "proverbial expression" rather than a literal offer of half of the kingdom, it is still an amazing statement to be given to Esther at this time.

Esther, you have my favor. I am disposed towards you in such a way that I want to give you what you ask for.

I don't know about you, but my expectation is for Esther to ask for the king to change his edict to save the Jews. She has the king's favor. Why not ask now?

4 And Esther said,
"If it please the king,
let the king and Haman come today
to a feast that I have prepared for the king."

5 Then the king said,
"Bring Haman quickly,
so that we may do as Esther has asked."

Instead of laying out for the king all that she has come to ask, she simply asks him to come to a feast that she has prepared for him. And she asks that he bring Haman along as well.

Whatever questions that might be going through the king's mind right now, he can only be thinking that Esther wants to honor him and Haman.

Esther must know that the king's heart could be volatile. She takes the time to honor the king. This shows humility as well.
The king is thrilled. He summons Haman to the feast.

So the king and Haman came to the feast that Esther had prepared.

⁶ And as they were drinking wine after the feast,
the king said to Esther,
"What is your wish?
It shall be granted you.
And what is your request?
Even to the half of my kingdom,
it shall be fulfilled."

⁷ Then Esther answered,

"My wish and my request is:
⁸ If I have found favor in the sight of the king,
and if it please the king to grant my wish
and fulfill my request,
let the king and Haman come to the feast
that I will prepare for them,
and tomorrow I will do as the king
has said."

After the feasting is largely over and they are sitting around drinking some after-dinner wine, the king repeats his offer that Esther shall have whatever she asks, "even to the half of my kingdom."

But Esther still refuses to pop the question. Instead, she invites both the king and Haman to another feast on the next day.

The only difference is that she makes a promise to explain her purpose then.

The culture of the Persians is somewhat different than my own. I might be a bit frustrated with Esther, that she is beating around the bush and not coming to the point. But that is not the feeling of the King. For him there is only a building of the expectation of something wonderful. And Esther must have some insight that this would be the best way to soften the king to what is to come.

Esther is more crafty than we realize. At the same time that she is buttering up the king, she is also baiting Haman. She appears that she wants to honor Haman even while her desire is that his plans are thwarted, his life be taken.

Haman is completely deceived as we will see.

Read Esther 5:9-13.

9 And Haman went out that day
 joyful and glad of heart.
 But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate,
 that he neither rose nor trembled before him,
 he was filled with wrath against Mordecai.
10 Nevertheless,
 Haman restrained himself
 and went home,
 and he sent and brought his friends and his wife Zeresh.
11 And Haman recounted to them
 the splendor of his riches,
 the number of his sons,
 all the promotions with which the king had
 honored him,
 and how he had advanced him
 above the officials and the servants of the
 king.
12 Then Haman said,
 "Even Queen Esther let no one but me
 come with the king to the feast she
 prepared.
 And tomorrow also I am invited by her together
 with the king.
13 Yet all this is worth nothing to me,
 so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the
 king's gate."

This section is filled with irony and extreme contrast. Haman leaves the feast absolutely full of joy! He has been given a great honor and Haman is all about being honored.

But as he is leaving the palace and going past the king's gate, who else does he see but Mordecai. And Mordecai continues to refuse to pay Haman any homage. "He neither rose nor trembled before him."

Haman's gladness turns to anger. He is filled with wrath towards Mordecai. It is all that he can do to restrain himself. Somehow, he does.

And he goes home and gathers around him his wife and friends. It is significant that we are told the name of his wife. She is called Zeresh. And she will have a greater role as things unfold.

Haman is simply wanting to complain. He has been honored by the king and the queen in ways that no other has. And yet it means nothing to him so long as Mordecai remains there at the king's gate in defiance.

Haman recounts his "greatness":

- Riches
- Sons
- Promotions
- I am going to a feast again tomorrow, prepared by the queen herself.

But it all means nothing to me, as long as Mordecai refuses to bow.

Read Esther 5:14

14 Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him,
"Let a gallows fifty cubits high be made,
and in the morning tell the king to have Mordecai hanged upon it.
Then go joyfully with the king to the feast."
This idea pleased Haman, and he had the gallows
made.

Zeresh leads the rest of the friends in coming up with a plan that will solve Haman's problem. Hang Mordecai on a gallows 50 cubits high. (That is about 75 feet in the air) The idea is to hang Haman and then go to the feast with joy.

Haman loves the idea and orders the gallows made.

It almost seems that Esther's plan, although going well, will fail. Mordecai may even be dead before Esther has an opportunity to give her request.

I, as the reader, want to ask the question: Why did she not ask the king yesterday, when she had the opportunity?

ESV **Esther 6:1**

On that night the king could not sleep.

Who is the cause of the king not being able to sleep on that night?

- The Unnamed Mover of all Things!

- The Hidden Hero!

Do you believe that even your sleep cycles are under the hand of God's providence?

I am not saying that you can always know what are God's purposes in your sleep cycles.

And I am in no way saying that you are not responsible to do all you can to get good sleep.

But I am saying that God is absolutely, in every case, in control of even your sleep cycles.

Do you believe this?

What difference would it make if you did?

And he gave orders to bring the book of memorable deeds, the chronicles, and they were read before the king.

The hand of providence is even more profound.

Here we have the king taking action to solve his insomnia.

He gives the order for his servant to bring him the "book of memorable deeds".

What is he doing?

He sits up in bed and turns on the History Channel. Only in this case the history channel is about him and his kingdom.

Some have thought that the king has picked the most boring material he can find so that he would fall back to sleep. If so, then his plan did not work. He ends up staying up all night.

I do not think the king is so much looking for boring material as he is trying to cure his boredom. Or, at least, he is going over things that needed doing, but did not get done during the normal daytime hours.

The point is that he is acting according to his own interests.

He is neither trying to do the will of God nor resist the will of God. He is just doing what he does.

But his doing is entirely under the sovereign hand of providence.

² And it was found written how Mordecai had told about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, and who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

I don't know how big this book was, but I am guessing that it contained a good amount of deeds. We are not told that the entire book was read to him that night. But we are told that the portion that he did read contained the record

of Mordecai rescuing him from the assassination plot of two of his eunuchs.
Was this accident? Was it luck?

I keep asking these questions because I truly believe that we look at so much of our lives as random and meaningless. We do not really believe that God is sovereignly in control of all things. We often live as if this world is spinning out of control.

I believe that there is rebellion.

I believe that there is also a curse place upon the creation so that nothing is quite like it should be.

But I also believe that every event that ever occurs is in the sovereign hand of Providence.

God rules this world. And it is his rule that gives purpose and meaning to our lives.

³ And the king said, "What honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?"

The king's young men who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."

Consider the timing of providence. What happens if Esther gives her plea before the king has insomnia?

The king is not aware of his indebtedness to Mordecai. And it is less likely that he will side with Mordecai.

Who is in control of the timing of these events?

How often do we see our timing as being off?

Tara was rear ended sitting on Hwy 18 a few weeks ago, getting ready to turn left. How often have I sat in the same spot as Tara was sitting and have not been hit?

Was it just bad luck that Tara happened to be sitting there at the moment when a car plowed into the car behind her who then ran into Tara?

I have a friend that is paralyzed from the waist down because he was hit by a drunk driver while changing his tire on the side of the road.

I have had to change my tire on the side of the road. Why did I not get hit? Maybe I have been more cautious, knowing what happened to Jim.

But was Jim's accident an accident?

We can call it an accident on one level.

But on an ultimate level, it was no such thing.

God is able to sovereignly order even the timing of events. And he does so for his own glory and for the good of his people. Even when we cannot discern his good hand.

Mordecai had no clue why he was not rewarded for uncovering the plot. But now we see that God wanted this deed to be in the forefront of the king's mind at this moment in time.

How cool is that?

How much of eternity is going to be taken up saying, "O my word... you have got to be kidding. That is what you were doing when I thought you did not even care!"

⁴ And the king said, "Who is in the court?"

Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace to speak to the king about having Mordecai hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

⁵ And the king's young men told him, "Haman is there, standing in the court."

And the king said, "Let him come in."

Haman thinks that his plans are going to succeed. He thinks Mordecai is history. He thinks that he will finally be rid of the stench of this Jew. What he does not know is that he is **ONLY** a pawn in God's chess match.

The powers of this world think that they are in control. They have no clue that they unwillingly serve the majestic glory of God. God truly does sit in heaven and laugh at those who would scoff at him.

⁶ So Haman came in,

and the king said to him,

"What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?"

And Haman said to himself,

"Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?"

⁷ And Haman said to the king,

"For the man whom the king delights to honor,

⁸ let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn,

and the horse that the king has ridden,

and on whose head a royal crown is set.

⁹ And let the robes and the horse

be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials.

Let them dress the man whom the king delights to honor,
and let them lead him on the horse through the square of the
city,

proclaiming before him:

'Thus shall it be done to the man
whom the king delights to honor.'

10 Then the king said to Haman,

"Hurry; take the robes and the horse, as you have said,
and do so to Mordecai the Jew who sits at the king's gate.

Leave out nothing that you have mentioned."

11 So Haman took the robes and the horse,
and he dressed Mordecai
and led him through the square of the city,
proclaiming before him,

"Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor."

12 Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate.

But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered.

The king has no idea that he is stabbing a knife right into the heart of Mordecai. He is simply rewarding a man that he has overlooked. And if the king made a habit of overlooking his servants, those same servants may not serve him so well in the future. It is interesting, from secular history, we know that King Ahasuerus will eventually be assassinated.

What I want you to see here is the character of our God.

Is it not true that God could have preserved his people in a much less dramatic fashion?

Is it not true that God did not have to use the weak things of the world to shame the wise?

What you must see is that the way in which God chooses to save says something about Him?

God is creative.

God is powerful.

God loves to display his power.

You say, "Is it not wrong of God to show off his power?"

It would be wrong if he were not God.

God is the central being in the universe. For him to not receive honor and glory and power would mean that these things would have to be given to someone or something else. That would be wrong. God must display his glory and receive praise for it.

But I will say that there is an element of God only showing his glory to his people and even then only in the end. So much of this is so hidden. God loves to do things behind the scenes.

Do not just look at the events themselves as you read Esther. Look at the God who designed the events and came up with the plan and worked to make it all come to pass.

¹³ And Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him.

Then his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him,

"If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of the Jewish people, you will not overcome him but will surely fall before him."

¹⁴ While they were yet talking with him,

the king's eunuchs arrived

and hurried to bring Haman to the feast that Esther had prepared.

Haman goes home with his tail between his legs. His great victory has ended in defeat.

And he tells his wife and his wise men all that has happened.

I am quite certain he is hoping for some word of encouragement.

Instead he hears from them a prophetic word of doom.

If Mordecai is a Jew, he will win and you will lose!

How do they know this?

- God rules over the prophetic utterances of his enemies!
- They speak truth even though they may hate that truth.

John 11:49-52 ⁴⁹ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. ⁵⁰ Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." ⁵¹ He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵² and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

Just as Haman is receiving this truly prophetic word of destruction from his wife, the eunuchs arrive to bring him to the feast that Esther has prepared for Haman and the King.

He has taken one beating already.

Now he is about to take another.

Now, let me ask you one question: Whose team do you want to play for?

Conclusions:

1. Esther acts boldly in faith and her actions are very important to the outcome. But Esther is not the true hero.
2. The true hero of this story is God.
3. God, our hero, will bring about a great reversal of circumstances when he returns.
4. God, our hero, will bring about reversals throughout our lives.

Applications:

1. Learn to serve God.
 - a. It matters and will be used by God in significant ways.
 - b. If I perish, I perish... but I will serve the true King with every breath that he gives me.
2. Learn to trust God.
 - a. I do not have the power to bring about victory.
 - b. Pray
 - c. Find peace and rest in God.
 - d. Praise the Hidden Hero!

Amen.